

# Montana DNRC *conversation*

## Baby Huey!

## Helitak crew aids stranded Livingston residents

Heavy snowmelt and a sagging Yellowstone River bridge produced a few anxious days for some Livingston residents in June – and led to an unexpected mission for the Montana DNRC.

As the powerful Yellowstone River crept upwards toward flood stage in Livingston on June 18, the city's Ninth

Street Island Bridge was headed in the opposite direction. Law enforcement and emergency officials monitoring the bridge observed a support pillar drop 18 inches in a 24-hour period; the shift caused the bridge bed to fracture and buckle, snapping its wooden guardrails. Officials declared the span too dangerous even for pedestrian use and by June 19 expected the whole works to collapse at any moment.

Residents of Ninth Street or Siebeck islands who hadn't already left their homes had no easy way to leave.

When officials from Park County Disaster and Emergency Services contacted Montana DNRC to arrange for helicopter assistance, they told Aviation Supervisor Chris Dargan the mission would involve airlifting emergency personnel and cargo onto the island. "But by the time we got there the mission had changed," Dargan said. "We were asked to evacuate any

people who wanted to get out."

Dargan, along with DNRC pilot Randy

Yeager and the incident management team, developed an evacuation plan. A Park County emergency official wrote a manifest. And the island-hopping shuttle was in business, using DNRC chopper N394M.



"It went really smooth," Dargan said. "We evacuated 16 people in all and it took about two hours. Everybody really appreciated the effort. We airlifted five dogs, too."

Evacuees were flown to Mission Field in Livingston, where they were met by Helitak crew member Scott Good, who helped them get their belongings onto a bus.

And little Baby Huey?

"There was just something really great about him," Dargan said. "I was loading him into the chopper and he got this huge grin on his face. He was having a great time."

Though it continues to stand, the Ninth Street Island Bridge has been condemned and is no longer in use. While officials decide what to do with it, an expandable metal truss bridge has been installed for residents of the island.

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

Energy, energy, energy. We read about it and hear about it every day, then pay for it at the gas pump. Energy consumption and conservation are serious issues for us individually and for the state. The Governor's 20X10 Initiative (20 percent reduction in energy consumption by 2010) asks us to examine our energy use and become more efficient. Right now, energy auditors are examining many state buildings for efficiency and needed upgrades. Thermostats are adjusted more carefully, and we use "footsies" instead of space heaters. Probably most important for our agency, we are taking a hard look at what vehicles we drive and when.



We're a pickup kind of people. We deal with the land, and we have to drive on gravel roads, two-tracks, and no tracks. But.... Do we need to drive 4X4's to every meeting? Do we

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# DNRC engineer had long history with Milltown Dam



**Siroky**

On March 28 of this year, Laurence Siroky stood amidst hundreds of Montanans – elected officials, fellow government employees, conservationists and the merely curious – and watched the waters of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork rivers slice through a broad gap of bare earth, a

gap that for 100 years had been occupied by the Milltown Dam.

Siroky, Chief of DNRC's Water Operations Bureau, reacted to the historic event in a manner befitting his 37-year career as an engineer and expert on dams.

"Dam removal is something – to engineers, it's kind of hard to watch – but it's necessary sometimes," Siroky said. "It's important to operate and maintain dams and keep them in good repair, but they do have a finite life, and when they reach the end of their life, they need to be removed."

Siroky had a more than passing interest in the fate of Milltown Dam. Over the course of 10 years he had taken part in several of the yearly inspections of the facility by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). By the time he became acquainted with it, Milltown was worn out. Punished by ice jams, spring floods, and a 5.7-magnitude earthquake in 1957, the dam had undergone numerous repairs, including a \$2.3M overhaul in 1987. The Montana Power Company was willing to sell Milltown to the State of Montana – specifically, to the DNRC. The asking price? One dollar.

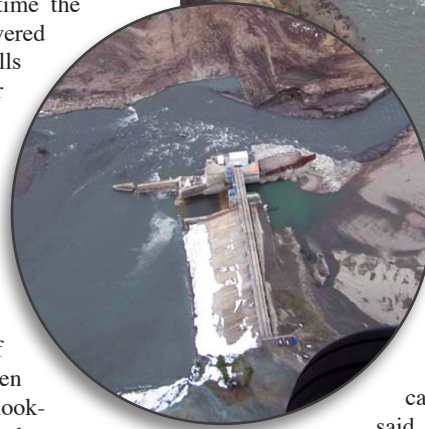
Siroky was involved in some of the earliest discussions about the future of Milltown, and among the first wave of engineers and officials

to recommend removal as the best option.

"When PPL bought dams and generating facilities from Montana Power, they didn't want Milltown, either, and NorthWestern was stuck with it," Siroky said. "It was around that time the EPA discovered arsenic in wells in the Bonner area, adjacent to the Milltown reservoir. I think that finally tipped the scales in favor of removal. Even EPA was looking at removal as a possibility."

That possibility became a goal in 2003. Gov. Judy Martz called for breaching Milltown in her State of the State address. In April, EPA announced the dam would be taken down, and the tons of polluted reservoir sediments removed.

Siroky's expertise in dams landed him an advisory position with the Natural Resources Damage Program, where he provided technical review and advice on the safest sequence for dismantling and breaching the dam. "It was decided they would do a 'wet' breach. After removing the power house, the next step was to allow the coffer dam to breach naturally." Concerned about the potential amount of sediment surge, Siroky advised the flow be reduced by opening a gate between the powerhouse and spillway. This would result in a slightly less dramatic breach, but increase downstream safety.



"People were told there would be a wall of water coming down the Clark Fork when the dam was breached, which probably would have been the case without reducing the flow," Siroky said. "Instead of one day, it probably took two or three days to breach completely."

"It was a little anticlimactic," Siroky said. "Everyone was expecting a huge flow all at once, but because of the way it was done the downstream sediment contribution was reduced."

## Director, continued from front page

all have a fuel-efficient sedan available to use? Can we use our vehicles more efficiently? What staff people really need to have a pick-up for daily use?

These are all questions that we've discussed among division administrators, and, as you might imagine, the talks are lively! We are all a bit wary of changing our ways. I believe, however, that the real changes come from you as individuals looking at how you do your job and how you can do it better by using less of those petroleum-based products – and saving energy!

We will be coming out with refined guidelines on vehicle use and purchase that we will implement with your help and support. More importantly, we can all set a good example in our everyday activities. I try, but in some ways I'm a mixed example. We have two pick-ups in our family – a newer Toyota Tacoma and an older ¾ ton Ford Diesel for pulling the stock trailer. But, I drive my Subaru mostly and try to keep it at 65MPH. My husband is using his Honda Shadow motorcycle more all the time although that will change in the winter!

– Mary

## RDB reviewing 121 grant applications

This spring, the Resource Development Bureau (RDB) received 121 grant applications for projects funded by the Renewable Resource and Reclamation and Development Programs. Application budgets range from

\$25,000 to \$300,000 for a total of about \$16.5 million. These projects are currently under review by 35 independent consultants and the RDB staff. Initial project ranking will take place August 13 – 22. We expect that the 61st



Legislature will approve funding for at least 60 percent of these projects. Based on this year's applications, DNRC grant funds will support a wide variety of activities such as lake shore reclamation, restoration of mine waste and abandoned petroleum well sites, irrigation system improvements, municipal

water and wastewater construction, watershed studies, renewable energy studies, and stream restoration. Applicants are government entities ranging from State agencies to irrigation districts.

# Water resources office Losing 60 Years of Experience

By Kerri Strasheim, Unit Manager, Bozeman RWO



Compton

**S**cott Compton began work for DNRC on January 2, 1979, in Miles City as an engineer with the Powder River Adjudication and moved to Bozeman in October of 1980. Scott became the Regional Manager in Bozeman in 1982, the position he retired from on June 27, 2008.

**What is your most memorable experience working for DNRC?**

It is hard to pick a most memorable experience, but one very memorable experience was placing

a padlock on Dennis Simpson's illegal diversion structure with a District Court order in hand and two Deputy Sheriffs in the background in case Dennis made an appearance. This was after he yelled in my face that he could do what he wanted, when he wanted, with HIS water.

**What was your most memorable field investigation?** A site visit for a hydropower proposal near Yellowstone National Park. The only way in was on horseback. When asked if I had ridden a horse before, I replied it had been a few years. The land owner said he would put me on an older, gentler mare. Once we started off it was quite apparent I was on the slowest horse. The owner then proceeded to state that "oh yeah, we are in Grizzly country, saw one just the other day up here." Of course, I could not help but feel like the bait for the rest of the trip.

**What was your most memorable office experience?** 1) In Miles City the offices were cubicles lined up in a row. The overhead lighting was fluorescent lights all in a long row. It had been a rainy few days and apparently a leak had sprung and softened the ceiling materials. There was a loud crash; the roofing and lights had fallen down across the cubicles and right across my desk. I could hear people yelling if I was ok. I wondered what all the yelling was about as I walked out of the bathroom which was across the office from my cubby. 2) A water user tried to come across my desk to get his hands on my neck after I told him he was in violation of the law. If he had not been overweight and my desk not had an oversized top, it would have been interesting indeed. He was upset!! 3) Watching the 9-11 disaster on a small TV someone scrounged up in the office. Jan and I had just returned from a field investigation and only had heard things on the radio. We stood in awe as we watched the scenes on the tube.

**What was the best experience you've had on the job?** There have been many very good experiences. I enjoyed when a resolution to a conflict was found and all the involved parties could agree to some extent and felt they had valuable input. When I was able to help an older rancher/farmer/water user understand their water right in actual use verses what a paper abstract may say. Measuring the flows of the West Gallatin River so the water users could identify an actual flow in cfs at low times versus just saying they want to keep the water at the level of a notch on the bridge that goes over the river.

**What do you feel was your most valuable contribution to DNRC?** Being able to listen to all sides of an issue and to make a reasoned decision or proposed solution and providing technical assistance to water users at no additional cost to them.

**What has changed the most about DNRC since you began?** Having to deal with consultants, developers and attorneys instead of the irrigators/water users. The days of working out a complaint or concern over a cup of coffee at the kitchen table of a farm/ranch house are pretty much over in this area.

**What do you plan to do in retirement?** Moving to a more temperate climate in New Mexico; continue to work, possibly in the water field if opportunity arises.

**What will you miss the most about DNRC in retirement?** Working with great department staff and most of the public. Working for the department as a whole but especially at a regional office level.



**J**an Mack started with DNRC on April 10, 1978, in the Kalispell office as a water rights analyst. From there he moved to open and manage the field office in Missoula in December of 1978 and then on to Bozeman in July of 1981 as a Water Rights Specialist III until his retirement on May 30, 2008.



Mack

**What is your most memorable experience working for DNRC?** Getting shot at in Hamilton while conducting a field investigation. We ended up in District Court, where I filed assault charges. The defendant argued that it was okay to shoot at me because I wasn't a person, and the law only applied to shooting at a person. Apparently, state employees were not people and could be shot at. Don McIntyre, my and DNRC's attorney, successfully argued that I was "a person" and that the guy did break the law. The District Court agreed with Don's argument, and in a court of law I was declared to be a person. The guy was found to be guilty, was given a month in jail, and served four weekends in jail. Good work, Don, and I loved the Mickey Mouse socks you wore to the hearing. Two firsts for the DNRC, I believe.

**What was your most memorable field investigation?** My field investigation with Dave Schmidt and Pat Kountz. We were driving the state Ford Explorer to the proposed point of diversion. I stopped at a side channel of the Jefferson River that looked quite deep. Pat said, "It's fine, go ahead. I drive across it all the time." With trepidation, I drove into the water. The far side had a steep bank which I almost didn't get up. After reaching the other side, the engine was wet and wouldn't start. Lifting the hood, the engine finally dried out. I asked Pat if there was another way out. No, we were on an island. Ah, Jeez!. We filled in the steep bank with large rocks and drove back across. We again stalled just out of the water. The engine took longer to dry out the second time. I couldn't get it out of low gear. The Ford dealer in Whitehall understood the situation: shut off the engine, put it in reverse and drive backwards—restart the engine and it's fine. That saved a slow drive back to Bozeman.

**What was your most memorable office experience?** HB 22—talking to or working with 500 people in one month. After getting reamed by get another very nasty guy, I retreated to the rest room for some much needed relief. A guy walks in, stands behind me and states, "What's this godd\*% BS about charging me for my water rights?" A guy just isn't safe anywhere.

**What was the best experience you've had on the job?** Working with all the wonderful people I've met through the years.

**What has changed the most about DNRC since you began?** Really a lot of things. I used to work with farmers and ranchers, real Montanans. The New Appropriations Rules have changed everything, making it impossible for most people to file today without hiring knowledgeable consultants.

**What do you plan to do in retirement?** Equilibrate. Work on house, barn, and yard projects. Have fun camping with my sweetie and the dogs.

**What will you miss the most about DNRC in retirement?** I'll tell you in six months.

## IT Staff keeping DNRC connected

A lot of activity has been going on in the DNRC Information Technology arena during the past few months. Between end-of-year computer purchases, GIS activities, IT projects and video conferencing expansion the IT staff has been busy.

### Video Conferencing Expansion

DNRC is putting the Governor's 20x10 energy saving challenge into action with purchase of four new video conferencing units. The video equipment, which allows group video conferencing for meetings, is being deployed in Bozeman, Miles City, Lewistown and Kalispell. The units will connect together and with video conferencing equipment in Helena and Missoula. Installation should be complete by the end of August.

### CGL Tracker online

CLOGS, the agency's program for tracking contracts and grants, has been upgraded and moved to a intranet-based application. The new CGL Tracker provides more functionality for agency staff tracking the status of thousands of contracts and grants awarded by DNRC. The system helps track payments, accruals, contract requirements and a myriad of other details. Development of the Loans portion of CGL Tracker (Contracts, Grants and Loans) has begun.

### GIS expansion

With the final signatures on the Enterprise GIS agreement, IT staff has been installing the latest version of ESRI software on workstations around the state. Planning has started for a

series of GIS training classes this fall to bring users up to speed on the latest software.

### Photo Database Application

Final touches are being made to the new DNRC Photo Database Application. The Photo database will allow DNRC staff to catalog photos of DNRC activities by keywords, dates, location, etc. The application will include both internal web interfaces and a public web application for searching for photos. The application should be online internally in the next few weeks and available to the public this fall.

### Restoration projects

A pair of projects are being developed this year for the Restoration coordinator. The web applications will allow the public to find grants from various state and federal governments and groups. The other web-based GIS application will help track the location of restoration projects funded by various state agencies across the state.

### Updates for F-300 and HRA

Work is taking place this year on the F-300 Fire Reporting system used by the Forestry Division and dispatchers in Montana. The system will provide a simpler web application for tracking fires and dispatching for fires. The system will in turn provide reporting for fire costs for DNRC. An update is also in the works for the Hazard Reduction Agreements tracking system used by Forestry. The web-application will streamline the process for tracking agreements on reducing fire hazards from timber harvests.



Alicia Stickney

## CARDD announces new hire

CARDD has a new employee in the Resource Development Bureau. Alicia Stickney has been hired to work with the RDB natural resource grant programs and special projects related to natural resource protection and development. Alicia has worked in the environmental consulting field for the past 15 years as writer and editor of natural resource-related research reports, technical work plans, technical articles, and environmental impact statements. Before that, she worked for the Montana Department of State Lands in the same building as she is now!

Alicia received a masters in geology from the University of Montana. She volunteers as a tutor for the Lewis and Clark Literacy Council English as a Second Language program, is an Audubon Society bird counter, and a CASA advocate for abused and neglected children. Alicia lives in Helena with her husband, 2 children, 1 dog, 1 rabbit, and 5 chickens. She enjoys beekeeping, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, birding, picking mushrooms and other wild edibles, and cooking.



Visit DNRC's website  
[www.dnrc.mt.gov](http://www.dnrc.mt.gov)

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## Conservation Corner

Transportation accounts for 66% of U.S. oil use – mainly in the form of gasoline. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to improve gas mileage.

### Driving Tips

- Idling gets you 0 miles per gallon. The best way to warm up a vehicle is to drive it. No more than 30 seconds of idling on winter days is needed. Anything more simply wastes fuel and increases emissions.
- Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking) wastes gas. It can lower your highway gas mileage 33% and city mileage 5%.
- Avoid high speeds. Above 60 mph, gas mileage drops rapidly. The [fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov) Web site shows how driving speed affects gas mileage.
- When you use overdrive gearing, your car's engine speed goes down. This saves gas and reduces wear. Using cruise control on the highway helps you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, will save gas.
- Use air conditioning only when necessary.
- Clear out your car; extra weight decreases gas mileage.
- Reduce drag by placing items inside the car or trunk rather than on roof racks. A roof rack or carrier provides additional cargo space and may allow you to buy a smaller car. However, a loaded roof rack can decrease your fuel economy by 5%.
- Check into telecommuting, carpooling and public transit to cut mileage and car maintenance costs.

From: <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/driving.html>



Emily Greene is pioneering the plastic's recycling at DNRC Headquarters. Stay tuned for the quarterly recycling newsletter coming soon!